



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0531NH-1 for Pittsfield School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant clearly articulates a comprehensive and coherent reform vision and a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests as they relate to the purpose of the solicitation. For example, the applicant states the New Hampshire Rural Education Consortium's (NHREC) reform vision is that every student will have access to deep and individualized learning supported by anytime, anyplace, and any pace instructional strategies. The applicant believes by creating and using innovative strategies in our schools, such as extended learning opportunities, inquiry-based instruction and online coursework; they will be able to ensure equity for all students, accelerated student achievement, and the narrow current achievement gaps. The applicant also indicates they are committed to growth in the RTT-D's four core educational assurance areas.</p> <p>Weaknesses: None noted.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant provides an approach to implementing its reform proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal. For example, the applicant in The New Hampshire Rural Education Consortium (NHREC) is a partnership of 27 schools spanning 151 rural districts. The applicant indicates all 27 schools in the consortium will participate in the project, and there is not a need for explaining the process used to select participating schools. The applicant states 544 educators, 2,919 high need students, and 2,210 (42.57%) low-income students will participate in the project. The applicant provides a detailed list describing demographics for each proposed participating school. Some schools have very few high need and low-income students, but the overall student population is very small. The applicant is proposing to serve all of those students at those schools.</p> <p>Weaknesses: The applicant fails to provide an explanation regarding why all students in the consortium at all of the schools across all of the school districts are not participating. The total number of students in the LEA or consortium does not match the number of students selected to participate. The rationale is unclear.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: None noted.</p> <p>Weaknesses: The applicant fails to provide a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools, and will help the applicant reach its outcome goals. The applicant simply states all consortium schools supports scaling up, and that the development of educators will lead to lasting change beyond the grant period. The applicant also notes the states ESEA Flexibility request has not been approved on the date of proposal submission, but the five outcomes included in the state-level policy are the building blocks for which the applicant is dependent upon. Furthermore, the applicant notes the schools span across 15 school districts, but it is unclear whether all schools participating make up the entire school district, or if there are additional schools within the 15 noted school districts that where the reform could be scaled up. Finally, the applicant refers reviewers to their logic model, which is illegible due to the small font size and colors. With so little information, it is impossible to assess how the proposal will be scaled and translated into meaningful reform.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	1
---	----	---

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: None noted.

Weaknesses: The reviewer is unable to completely assess the selection criteria because the applicant does not subgroup achievement data as required under 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA to include: students from major racial and ethnic groups; students with disabilities; and students with limited English proficiency. The applicant provides subgroup categories titled: Overall, Economically Disadvantaged, Title I, and IEP. Furthermore, the applicant provides zero data for many of the schools in categories of IEP and Title I. Without appropriate subgroup data as required by the solicitation, it is impossible to validly assess improved student outcomes in the areas of performance on summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: The applicant provides evidence of some of their success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching. For example, the applicant indicates from the 2007-08 school year to the 2011-12 school year Pittsfield schools have seen double-digit growth in the number of students reaching proficiency on the state standardized assessment tests. The applicant provides evidence of Achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools. For example, the applicant indicates In 2010, Pittsfield Middle School and Pittsfield High School were identified as persistently low-achieving schools by the New Hampshire Department of Education. In 2011, ambitious and significant reforms were implemented funded partially by the schools' School Improvement Grant, and Pittsfield Middle School and Pittsfield High School demonstrated significant gains with Pittsfield High School scoring above the state NECAP averages. Eighth grade ELA NECAP scores increased by 10% from 2010-11 to 2011-12. Eleventh grade NECAP scores showed that 79% of students were proficient or above in English language arts compared to a rate of 77% for the state. The applicant states student performance data will be available to students, educators, and parents through an online tool, Power School, which was implemented in 2011. Students are required to present their own student data to an adult through student led conferencing.

Weaknesses: The applicant failed to appropriate subgroup data as defined in the solicitation which would allow the review to assess improvements in student learning and close achievement gaps, including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates. Furthermore, the applicant indicates two of the 27 participating high schools are in a separate Investing in Innovation (i3) project with 13 other members of the New England Network for Personalization and Performance, and uses these two schools as references for illustrating record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning, but the NHREC is not overseeing this project so it is impossible to determine whether the applicant has had success in wide-scale transformations. The applicant has selectively provided data for some schools in the NHREC, and does not provide data which allows the reviewer to assess all the criteria as defined in the solicitation. Overall, it is extremely difficult to assess the clear track record of the LEA because they do not provide their own track records of success, but rather those of the school districts and schools participating in other projects outside of the consortium.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
--	---	---

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: The applicant provides limited evidence of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. For example, the applicant indicates the Pittsfield School District holds an Annual School District Meeting held in March of each year for the citizens of the district to consider the recommended budget for the ensuing school year. Before the meeting as well as at the meeting itself, the district provides an Annual School District Report and proposed

budget that includes actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff.

Weaknesses: The applicant does not provide information regarding the transparency practices for the 15 school districts that each of the 27 school districts are a part of, and it does not discuss how it discloses their own expenditures of state and local funds (if any). The applicant indicates New Hampshire Department of Education publishes teacher salary schedules and salaries on their websites. Actual personnel salaries at the school level of teachers only and instructional staff only are available only on an annual basis in the manner described above. They are not made available at the school level. Furthermore, the applicant notes this is the common practice for all participating NHREC members. Although the Pittsfield School District is the fiscal agent, it does not take the other schools off of the hook in explaining how funding is used at the school level across all of the 15 different school districts. Overall, this is unacceptable and does not provide stakeholders with the transparency needed to hold the participating school districts accountable regarding the use of public monies. The applicant does not note that there is a plan to increase transparency, which is also a problem.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: The applicant effectively demonstrates successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal. For example, the applicant indicates New Hampshire is the national leader in supporting personalized learning environments at the state level and remains the only state that requires high school credit to be awarded based on mastery of competencies rather than seat time. The New Hampshire Department of Education has initiated and supports a state-level policy environment that provides foundational support and leadership for student-centered learning. Furthermore, the applicant indicates that the state believes moving from a compliance driven accountability system and evolving toward a supportive structure and culture will accelerate the implementation of reforms, which in turn will remove obstacles and promote better outcomes for all students. Finally, the applicant states that in July 2012, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) honored New Hampshire's State Board of Education and Department of Education with its 2012 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation, recognizing "the state's goal to reduce the dropout rate to 0% by 2012 by, as well as other strategies including: eliminating 'seat time' and implementing personalized student learning.

Weaknesses: None noted.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: The applicant clearly demonstrates meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal. For example, applicant states participating districts completed a survey asking about numerous factors related to personalizing education for all students in their district. The survey was sent to school faculty and staff, students and their families, school and district board members as well as community partners and other key stakeholders. Over 1,264 surveys were received from across the participating districts (with students representing 27%). Across the districts, 83.6% of surveyed participants agreed that all students are known well by at least one adult at the school. 76% of students surveyed also agreed to that statement. Another question on the survey indicates that only 39.9% of surveyed participants agreed schools focus on results and drop activities that do not produce results. The applicant also states forums were held in Littleton and Berlin on October 1st, and in Milton on October 2nd with approximately 75 stakeholders (teachers, administrators, parents, students and school board members). Forum participants were asked to identify strategies their schools have used to increase student learning and achievement; and to identify what they needed to improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students with support to graduate from high school, college and career ready, which was later used to prepare the application. The applicant provides ample evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools. Finally, the applicant provides letters of support from one charitable foundation, the Stafford Learning Center, the Family Resource Center, the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, and the NHREC.

Weaknesses: The applicant provides no information on the total number of participants in the survey pool. The applicant also fails to appropriately demonstrate or indicate support from the Union representation for all of the schools participating in the project. Also, the applicant does appear to survey all educators to assess support for implementing this new project.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:** The applicant clearly demonstrates a quality plan for an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal contained within the applicant's proposal, including identified needs and gaps that the plan will address. For example, the applicant indicates results taken from surveys collected during stakeholder engagement sessions that were conducted in August/September 2012 by participating LEA's indicate that teachers and administrators across the NHREC need support in: Providing support to students learning at their own pace; Assisting students in demonstrating mastery of content through experiences that require research, reflection, and presentation of their work; Working in teacher teams to improve practice; Developing a governance role for students; Setting personal goals and plans for students; and Systematically using data to improve teaching and learning will be used personalized learning environments and is the driving force of reform in the proposal. The NHREC's role in the project will be to work on an improvement-to-innovation strategy to advance educator practice and better support learning. Consortium Improvement Teams will be created to assist in refining the logic model as the analysis of needs and gaps continue.

**Weaknesses:** It is unclear what role if any does the NHREC is conducting assessments of needs and gaps. It appears the organization relies heavily on the schools and school districts to provide information. It is also unclear who the lead LEA is, will it be the Pittsfield School District, or the NHREC.

### C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:** The applicant provides a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. For example, the applicant indicates teachers and advisors will be responsible for ensuring students understand what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. The applicant will use the personal learning plan (PLP) to illustrate and explain the map to students and describe their individual progress towards achievement. The PLP will include a digital portfolio containing a collection of student work in multiple formats, ensuring development goals are linked to college and career ready standards. Each student will create an annual personal learning plan with the guidance of teachers, advisors, and parents or other caretakers. The plan will incorporate the student's aspirations to include potential career goals. Goals will be directly linked to the state's competency development system and college and career readiness standards. Students will also be able to measure their progress towards those goals regularly. The applicant states students will be able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest by participating in extended learning opportunities (ELO), which is a part of each school district's policy. Each school district has the liberty of developing their own ELO policy and structure to suit the needs of their students. The ELO will be extended to grades K-12, and developed by each individual school in the consortium. Learning experience includes: capstone learning, online learning experiences, honors challenges, and dual enrollment. NHREC schools are piloting performance-based assessments that allow students to demonstrate mastery of critical content, skills and traits. The applicant also notes that the adopted CCSS and college and career readiness standards are inclusive of content and what are referred to as 21st Century skills. Students and parents will revisit and reset short and long term goals to ensure academic planning supports the necessary following steps. The PLP will be the main guide for all participating students. Finally, the applicant indicates all the schools in the consortium have been employing and will continue to employ Response to Intervention approaches to insure the needs of all students are met and will continue to do so. The applicant also indicates schools have support teams and specialists in place to help ensure quality interventions are monitored and adjusted as needed.

**Weaknesses:** Because the applicant has failed to properly illustrate the achievement gaps as well as the proficiency and growth data for all subgroups attending the 27 schools across the 15 school districts, it is impossible to validly assess the total quality of the plan. It is also impossible to determine whether the approaches for improving student learning and teaching are the appropriate approaches for the students across all student groups. The applicant's failure to provide information regarding specific subgroup attendance in the consortium or at least for each of the participating schools makes it impossible to assess whether students truly will access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. Furthermore, the applicant's solution for NHREC for diverse cultural context is to extend the 'community' to a worldwide audience and provide the global/local connection for NHREC students, which is not a comprehensive plan for exposing students to diverse cultures. Additionally, the applicant does not appropriately describe the varieties of high quality instructional approaches and environments. The applicant simply reiterates that personalized learning approaches will provide a variety of instructional approaches and environments. There is no mention of evidence-based resources or references to models that could potentially be used for the purpose of the proposed project. Finally, the applicant provides an extremely limited plan for providing training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to

use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. There is no mention of technical supports for students and teachers for using Power Schools the student portal for information. The applicant indicates the teacher of record (uncertain of meaning) will be provided time to develop the PLP with each student and to communicate the process with families.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: (a) The applicant clearly indicates an approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. For example, the applicant indicates educator professional development to include: improving teaching practices needed to personalize learning, examining student assignments and student work using new forms of assessment and developing collaborative practices that address each student's needs. The applicant also states that each school's schedule will be modified to include collaborative learning time for all staff. Teacher teams will be encouraged to use allocated professional development time flexibly. Professional development sessions will be conducted away from school sites throughout the year, and will also include school-based opportunities for professional development. Engagement in content will be marked by student choice in selecting their pathway to learning. The PLP will include state assessments enabling educators to measure progress toward college- and career-ready goals. Teachers and students will review the PLPs several times per year, including at least two meetings with families. Each participating school currently uses some form of benchmark assessment to gauge student progress at regular intervals. The applicant has a comprehensive plan for assessing and providing feedback to improve teachers' and principals' effectiveness. The Consortium Improvement Team, which will consist of a group of administrators, teachers and technical assistance partners, will meet regularly every other month to review and discuss grant progress and improvement issues, progress and future innovation. They will provide feedback on systems and processes which will be valuable for continuously improving the project. This team will also assess needs and strengths of each participating school district before the project begins. The initial assessments will be the foundation of the plan of professional development and technical assistance across the consortium. The applicant indicates teachers and principals will be provided feedback to improve practices and effectiveness using the state's Model Teacher Evaluation System which rates educators as Highly Effective, Effective. The applicant indicates that all teachers in relation to student performance shall be required to document student academic performance each year using student learning objectives in conjunction with peers and administrators to assess the extent to which goals have been achieved. (b) The applicant clearly demonstrates all participating educators have access to, and know how to use, tools, data and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation. For example, the applicant indicates all NHREC schools are currently using an RTI approach to identifying academic, as well as social/emotional needs and will continue to do so. The PLP will be used in conjunction with the RTI to ensure student goals and aspirations are clearly understood in the discussion. This comprehensive, community- and family based approach will keep the student at the center of all decisions. A digital portfolio platform will be developed that will serve as a warehouse of student work and associated competencies. Each district's Data Team has established and maintains their own regular schedule of data review that includes: attendance data, student achievement data, special education data, discipline data and others. Ongoing and regular formative assessments as students work to achieve and demonstrate mastery of learning objectives complement regular standardized measures such as NECAP, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and AIMS-web are used to assess the effectiveness of resources in meeting student needs. (c) Finally, the applicant clearly indicates that all participating school leaders and school leadership teams will have training, policies, tools, data and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs and accelerates student progress through common and individual tasks toward meeting college- and career-ready standards. For example, the applicant states at each school, the school leadership team (or school data team) is responsible for vision and policy management, managing the data infrastructure, determining the model of inquiry and data use, providing professional development (training) to support the data analysis process, and monitoring the progress of the school in the effective use of data. The applicant also notes that students have served on some of the schools IMPACT team which has focused on school climate and has conducted a student/faculty and staff survey and is currently researching student led restorative justice systems for middle high schools which is a wonderful, collaborative way to address school climate and culture issues that need to be addressed before the project begins. Teachers and principals will engage in the personalized approach and deeper learning opportunities offered to them through collaborative learning teaming and personalized professional development. The applicant believes supportive, professional learning environments will help attract and retain highly effective teachers across all schools.

Weaknesses: Although the applicant provides a plan for each of the criteria, plans are not fully-developed, making it difficult for the review to gain a complete overall picture of the plans for improving teaching and leading by implementing personalized learning environments.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:** The applicant clearly illustrates a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. For example, the applicant indicates the Pittsfield School District will be the lead LEA, and will provide project oversight, contract development and management, management of the relationship with the U.S. Department of Education, allocate resources in accordance with the approved budget. The applicant also indicates that the Pittsfield School District will retain decision making authority for the project. The New Hampshire Rural Education Consortium (NHREC) has established practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized, student centered learning. The NHREC will provide day-to-day oversight of the project new positions to be funded through RTT-D. New positions include: 2 administrators, one Technology Coordinator, an Administrative Assistant, and a Project Director. The Consortium Board which will be composed of LEA superintendents, key stakeholders and community partners, will develop project policies, provide contract input and review, review member progress, provide annual project reports to school boards and recommend policies to local boards in support of personalized learning. The board will provide input and support throughout the term of the project and ensure its sustainability. The Consortium Board functions in an advisory capacity to the Lead LEA. The applicant indicates all NHREC schools currently have in place functioning School Leadership Teams that have the flexibility and autonomy over a range of factors impacting implementation in accordance with local district policies and the terms of the project, including but not limited to school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators and school level budgets. Students will have the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. For example, the applicant indicates at the beginning of each course or semester, students and their families will be made aware of competency requirements and associated performance standards. Personalization of learning environments within this project will build on recent progress. The local school boards of the state are required to adopt and implement written policies and procedures relative to extended learning opportunities. New Hampshire defines extended learning as the primary acquisition of knowledge and skills through instruction or study outside of the traditional classroom, including, but not limited, to: apprenticeships and internships, community service, private instruction, independent study, online courses and performing groups. Finally, Practices, policies and rules of NHREC schools and districts provide learning resources and utilize instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELL). ELL students take part in ACCESS, an English language proficiency test. Personal learning plans are developed with the support of advisors or teachers in collaboration with parents; personal learning plans provide the basis for semi-annual parent conferences, which are or will be student-led, personalizing the experience for all students

**Weaknesses:** The applicant's governance structure is extremely confusing throughout the application. It was only made clear in this section. The lines for policies, structure, and rules are very blurred, and it's unclear which organizations will lead the project. The applicant fails to discuss having any meetings should the grant be awarded, the frequency of meetings to take place during the implementation phase, and which key stakeholders will take part in any of those activities. No timelines have been provided. Overall, needs to more clearly define roles and responsibilities of key collaborators and consortium partners and appropriately link those collaborations and partnerships throughout the application.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
--	----	---

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:** The applicant clearly demonstrates a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator and level of the education system with the support and resources they need. For example, the applicant indicates many of the participating school sites (Profile, Bethlehem, Lisbon, Lafayette, Nute) are currently using PowerSchool , which makes student performance data available to students and families at any time. In addition, some sites (Littleton, Bethlehem, Profile and Lisbon) have added software (Milepost) to track individual student growth in ways that can be shared with students, teachers and families. The applicant indicates some of the schools are currently unable to provide access to online tools and learning resources which would enable 24 hour 7- days a week availability. For example, Berlin is still in need of increased bandwidth and web filtering software to fully engage, but those improvements and upgrades will be completed after the award. Several of the other schools will also benefit from RTT-D in innovating the way the resources are provided for students, parents, and educators. The applicant states the NHREC will develop an online student work calibration and collaboration tool that will foster work across and within schools. The New Hampshire Department of Education provides all LEA's and school's access to the PerformancePLUS data system which can

provide students and parents access to powerful student data. The New Hampshire Department of Education received a federal grant that enables the Department to continue to provide PerformancePLUS free of charge to districts through at least 2014-15. The statewide deployment of PerformancePLUS will offer every school community full access to student information data.

Weaknesses: It is unclear how the NHREC will realistically provide technical support to 27 schools across 15 different school districts in such a rural area. With the amount of schools that will need infrastructure developed at implementation, the various stages of technological infrastructure, the suspected technical support needed for new infrastructure, and basic training needs at various times in various locations, it is very difficult to see how one person will successfully oversee them all.

### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant demonstrates a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. For example, the applicant states a consortium improvement team (CIT) will be established and become the primary driver of the continuous improvement process, and will consist of a cross representative group from each district. This team will meet regularly every quarter to review and discuss grant progress and improvement issues, progress and future innovation. The applicant also clearly provides a timeline illustrating their continuous improvement efforts. The table describes the applicant's goals, the proposed activities, timeline, deliverable, and persons or group responsible for carrying out those activities. The teams will use student data to make informed-decisions for each school and/or district. Comprehensive needs assessments will be conducted before the project is implemented so that modifications can be made. The applicant also indicates they will incorporate program evaluation strategies into all activities at project implementation. The CIT members will be required to share information at the individual district level through their District School Improvement Team (DSIT) and ultimately each School Leadership Team (SLT). Principals meet frequently with central office administrators to discuss all aspects of the district progress toward the goals of the project. Improvement teams will directly support the development and ongoing use of program evaluation tools and procedures across the district.</p> <p>Weaknesses: The applicant's plan for measuring and monitoring project activities has huge gaps and is not comprehensive enough considering the large number of school districts participating in the proposed project. Furthermore, the applicant fails to discuss sharing any and all data necessary to evaluate and assess project outcomes. Because of the way schools are governed across the various school districts, it is unclear of whether policies and procedures are in place to ensure data is shared among partners and participating schools.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant provides a comprehensive plan that details their strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. For example, the applicant indicates updates will be provided during regularly scheduled school board and committee meetings, which are open to the public. School newsletters are sent home at regular intervals to parents electronically, with print versions made available to those without internet access. The internet and social media will also be used to inform stakeholders of progress, events and opportunities for engagement. Furthermore, the applicant states school administrators, staff and district superintendent meet regularly with parent and community organizations such as: the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Pittsfield Listens, PTO, Pittsfield Parent Connection and other local civic and school groups to provide information related to curriculum, initiatives, student performance and staffing, and will also allow parents to have a voice in determining future directions and areas of focus for the schools. The applicant states superintendents of all the school districts will be active within the communities and make regular appearances, give reports, answer questions and receive feedback. Districts will also regularly host special events to support communication, such as community forums and open houses. The proposed activities will surely provide adequate opportunities for engagement with internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>Weaknesses: None noted.</p>		

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant illustrates ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. The applicant has provided an appropriate rationale for selecting each measure by grades, how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success. Furthermore, the applicant states a locally designed "Early Warning System" for the middle and high school grades will be integrated into the continuous improvement/data team process across all NHREC schools to will ensure indicators are used to identify and flag students at risk for failure which enable the project participants to review and improve over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.</p> <p>Weaknesses: The applicant does not provide provide performance measures by subgroup, therefore it is impossible to completely and comprehensively evaluate their rationale for selecting each measure. The applicant uses the overall baseline for each performance measure. Also, the applicant does not provide at least 12 performance measures as defined in the notice.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant clearly illustrates a quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities. For example, the applicant indicates effectiveness will be assessed by reviewing investments made in professional development, and will be monitored by the NHREC Director and CIT through student achievement data in core subject areas. Furthermore, the applicant states continuous improvement processes will assist NHREC in identifying potential variables that may represent waste and enable teachers, principals, central office administrators and other stakeholders to identify potential solutions to address any less than satisfactory outcomes. Staff investments will also be evaluated in terms of sustainability of those positions following the grant, with a focus being on developing programs and staffing levels that are sustainable into the future. The plan for evaluation will allow the educators and project staff to make necessary modifications as needed, and shift resources in the event there was a need.</p> <p>Weaknesses: The applicant does not provide plans to assess the improved technology investments to ensure the rollout has been effective as this component has multiple roles in the project to include communication between school and educators, and provides no information on plans to assess new or improved access to student proficiency data to students, parents, and teachers at schools that have little or no technology infrastructure.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant clearly illustrates a budget that is is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal, and clearly provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. For example, the applicant indicates at total of \$8,862,897 (with a 10% increase for each year of the grant) committed to the project will come from District Revenues, which is noted under the "Funds From Other Sources" category. The applicant notes foundation and School Improvement Grants will also be used for each year of the project. The year one total of those grants equal \$3,268,000. The applicant notes the Project Management Costs portion of the project is a one time investment.</p> <p>Weaknesses: None noted.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths: The applicant clearly demonstrates a plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. For example, the applicant states Title II funding will be allocated to sustaining the project along with other grant funding available to each school will be used to support ongoing professional development beyond the life of the RTT-D grant. State funds will be allocated in support of school improvement programs such as the funding presently proposed budget. Other available federal, state, and local funding will be used to sustain the RTT-D projects at each school. The applicant also provides a</p>		

budget that describes the four years beyond the grant period. The budget includes the total amount of the project budget, the amount of federal resources that will be needed, the amount of other resources that will be allocated to the project, and specific logic for expenditures included in the budget.

Weaknesses: The applicant's plan depends heavily on state funds. The applicant does not explain how the project can be sustained without the use of so many financial resources. Sustainability across all of the various school districts is also very unclear.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:** The applicant illustrates a plan for providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students, giving highest priority to students in participating schools with high-need students. For example, the applicant states Pittsfield School District has established a successful public and private partnership through the Interagency Team of Pittsfield. Partners include public entities such as Community Bridges (Area Agency1), Riverbend Community Mental Health, Division of Children, Youth and Families2 and the Department of Juvenile Justice Services3 as well as private entities, such as Child and Family Services. The applicant provides 7 appropriate population-level desired results defined by population group, type of result, and desired results. The applicant indicates they will build capacity of staff in participating schools by developing an interagency team as a Tier 3 intervention support. The partnership approach uses the resources of each agency to support students in grades PK-12. The interagency team will address the obstacles that hinder the successful completion of high school with a plan for college or career through: 1) school social worker, school psychologist, or school counselor; 2) restorative justice program; 3) alternatives to in and out of school suspensions; 4) dropout prevention programs such as Rehabilitation for Empowerment, Natural Supports, Education and Work (RENEW); 5) social skill training; 6) parent training; 7) professional development for personnel working with students and families with significant challenges; and 8) inter-agency protocols to promote efficiency and prevent duplication of services. The applicant states the Interagency Team of Pittsfield is committed to preventing students from dropping out of school, enhancing a student's successful completion of school and assisting students to manage challenging issues

The applicant indicates the Interagency Team of Pittsfield and its partners will track the selected indicators by collecting, compiling, sharing and analyzing the following data: 1) the number of activated treatment plans developed by Tier 3 teams; 2) the number of behavioral incidents responded to through restorative justice practices in the school year; 3) the number of in and out of school suspensions; 4) the number of students activating and completing a dropout prevention plan (e.g. RENEW); 5) the number of student successfully completing a social skills group; 6) the number of parents participating in parent training opportunities; 7) the number of inter-agency protocols completed collaboratively with the district and outside social service agencies; 8) the number of school and agency personnel participating in effective communication strategies.

**Weaknesses:** The applicant does not clearly indicate whether these services are available to all of the school districts, and all of the 27 participating schools or are these partnerships only for the Pittsfield School District and schools/regions that may be in close proximity. Because of this, it is unclear whether this plan is truly comprehensive because it is unclear whether services are for all schools, or just the LEA.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas of adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace, builds data systems (especially in those schools with limited infrastructure presently), develops the foundations which will allow principals to recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers, and with the implementation of personalized learning environments, could turn-around lowest achieving schools. The applicant's proposal illustrates a wonderful approach to providing solid, long-term approaches which will provide students, teachers, and administrators with the tools and supports enabling college and career

readiness. NHREC will play a huge role in providing professional development (on-site and in school) relative to the implementation of the personalized learning environments.

Total	210	134
-------	-----	-----



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0531NH-2 for Pittsfield School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Pittsfield application is a consortium of 15 rural districts, with 27 participating schools in the state of New Hampshire. The applicant description outlines the *four core educational assurance areas* stating it will:

1. Develop competencies and local assessments using existing state standards (*Standards and Assessments*)
2. Develop protocols for educators to use to analyze student work (*Data systems*)
3. Implement a new educator evaluation system (*Effective educators*)
4. Identify high-need schools (*Low-achieving schools*)

The applicant depicts a reasonable Logic Model to guide its project initiatives. This approach includes learning, teaching and leading, district support, partnerships and continuous improvement using two strands - standard for deep learning and personalized pathways to mastery.

The alignment with the core educational assurances areas and project initiatives are not particularly ambitious in that much of the work in competencies and the educator evaluation system are being done at the state-level. The applicant also plans to create Extended Learning Opportunities, which are also state required at the high school level.

The project initiatives are not entirely clear until they are specified later in the Budget section.

Because the reform vision is not particularly ambitious and is not clearly articulated, the score for this section is in the bottom of the high range.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	3
---	----	---

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes the process to select the district and school participants as being voluntary. This is the extent of the selection process. The applicant contends that voluntary participation is the best direction. This weakens the district's

selection of participating schools.

A list of the 27 participating schools is provided that includes the required school demographic data. Some of the data is confusing. In some instances, the percentage of participating students is inconsistent with the raw data provided.

The extent to which the applicant's approach to implementing the personalized learning plan initiatives for students is short on implementation details. Overall, the applicant does not demonstrate a clear differentiated approach to the 27 schools to be served.

A strong component of the plan is the creation of a Consortium Improvement Team that is designed to coordinate the project's activities, which are primarily professional development for teachers. The work is focused on building teacher effectiveness. It is unclear how the initiatives will directly accelerate student learning as the grant's initiatives to students are limited.

Due to the data inconsistencies, the lack of rigor used for the school selection criteria, and the limited initiatives for students, the score for this section is in the low end of the medium range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
---	----	---

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the consortium structure supports the scale up of its reform plan and contends that its focus on educator development will lead to permanent changes. Further, the applicant refers to its Logic Model as evidence of support for reaching its goals.

The applicant's Logic Model does not include measurable outcomes, timelines or responsible parties. Therefore, it lacks the necessary detail to discern the ability of the applicant to reach its goals resulting in a score in the low range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	0
---	----	---

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides data tables to support its implementation vision. Data is provided for the 27 participating schools using growth outcomes based on summative state assessment. The growth outcomes are established by the state. Proficiency outcomes are not specifically provided as evidence of outcomes.

Missing in the outcomes are data for the required student subgroups. The applicant uses Title I as a subgroup, which is not a defined group. Additionally, the applicant does not provide data for its groups of less than 10. This lack of data does not provide accountability for those schools with missing data.

The achievement gap data is also missing subgroup information and in all instances the gap is compared to the "overall" subgroup as the highest performing. This is not an accurate assumption for accountability purposes. In some instances there are goals without baseline data. Also missing are the state levels for the gap data.

The graduation data is also missing subgroup information. The goals for 2015-2016 are all at 100%. This may be ambitious and is not realistic and achievable.

Some of the college enrollment data tables are missing goals and the required subgroups are not included. The data tables for the postsecondary degree attainment are confusing. There is discrepancy in the two years of the baseline data and the goals are the same for each high school in the consortium.

Due to the incomplete data tables, the score for this section is zero.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3

### (B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant district describes all of its member districts and schools as having success in some area - assessment, graduation rates, college, use of data, development of a teacher evaluation system and school structures. The applicant does not provide evidence specific to the success of each of the individual districts and schools.

The applicant identifies successful activities of two of its consortium high schools that are participating in a federal grant. Student outcome data is not provided as evidence of this success. Data is provided for another foundation grant showing progress for the first six months of implementation.

The applicant district itself is completing on-line curriculum and course competencies, developing performance assessment rubrics and expanding extended learning opportunities. It provides some data to support student proficiency growth although the graphic for Pittsfield's growth from 2008 to 2012 is unclear because a comparison is not shown. Additionally, for success in college-going rates, only one year of data is shown as compared to state results.

The applicant cites the activities and outcomes as a result of the federal School Improvement Grants (SIG). Specifically, stating that the consortium will build on the past experience of piloting the new teacher evaluation system in three of the participating SIG districts. Pittsfield provides evidence of gains in only two SIG schools. No information or evidence is provided about the successes of the other participating districts in their low-performing schools.

The applicant district describes the availability of performance data through its own on-line tool. Information about the resources in the other participating districts is not provided.

The applicant and participating districts have been taking positive actions to advance student learning although the evidence is lacking to ascertain a clear record of success for the past four years. Therefore, the score for this section is in the low range.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
--	---	---

### (B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

None of the school expenditure data is currently available to the public. The applicant has evidence of personnel salaries however; this information is for the district as a whole. The applicant states that the level of availability for this information is the same for all the participating districts.

There is however teacher salary information on the state's web site. There is no indication that the districts' have links to it on

their own web sites.

Because the four categories of school-level expenditures are not already available, the score for this section is zero.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

5

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

As evidenced in the application, the conditions at the state are such that implementation would not be hindered. There are no state legal, statutory or regulatory issues.

The application lacks information about the levels of autonomy of the consortium participants. Therefore, the score for this section is in the medium range.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

4

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a robust process of engaging its stakeholders by all of its participating districts. Evidence of this engagement is provided and overall is comprehensive. It shows the surveys used and the responses from over 1,200 participants. Additionally, three community forums were held for stakeholders.

Letters of support are included in the application. Notably, there is only one letter of support from one of the participating consortium district's teachers associations. No explanation is included about the other seven districts. Also, there is no discussion or evidence about the direct engagement of the associations.

Overall, the level of engagement is demonstrated however, the lack of union involvement and support is undocumented. Therefore, the score for this section is in the bottom of the medium range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has put forth a plan to conduct a needs assessment. It states that the Consortium Improvement Team will conduct the analysis in three phases however, the plan does not include specific measures and deliverables.

The applicant states that the needs assessment will result in a coordinated plan of professional development and technical assistance. It is unclear how the applicant can predict the results of the needs assessment prior to conducting it. Nonetheless, the score for this section is high.

### C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan for preparing students includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible party. The timelines however

are identified by year and thus do not provide enough specifics to ensure that the project is on track.

The activities in the plan are general. For example, the project identifies the use of personal learning plans for students without providing detail on their development and usage. Further, for the ELOs, the activities do not address implementation in the various grade levels of elementary, middle and high school. ELOs would be very different in each of these grade spans. Overall, the plan activities identified could be described as goals. The details of the plan are sparse.

The applicant states that once the competency work is completed, students will better understand the content relevance. On-line courses are currently available based on the competencies. The proposal includes funds for technology to support on-line learning.

Additionally, a personal learning plan will be developed for each student in the participating schools. It is unclear how the plan will be developed with the student and parent. As part of this initiative, students will be trained on how to access and use the plan to track and manage their learning after it is developed. A sample template for the student plan is not provided as evidence in the application so it is difficult to visual the content.

For the extended learning opportunity component, this is a state requirement for high schools. It is unclear how this initiative would work for elementary school students. The applicant describes this initiative as a strategy for deep learning, exposure to diverse cultural experiences to serve as a high-quality approach. This is not clearly articulated on how the quality of the out of school program will be assured.

Approaches to mastery of critical academic content is not sufficiently addressed in the application other than referring to the competency work and personalized learning plans. These strategies are frameworks not learning approaches for students.

The personalized learning plans are scheduled to be reviewed/updated annually. Progress will be reviewed with students and parents twice a year. The results of formative assessments are scheduled to be shared with teachers, families and student through report cards and parent conferences. This frequency does not provide students with access to a sequence of instructional strategies on an on-going basis throughout the school year nor does it provide them with on-going regular feedback or recommendations for instructional approaches and supports.

The applicant states that RTI will be refined to address struggling student's academic, social and emotional status, however no details are provided about this refinement process. The community partnership, which is one of the grant initiatives, will be used to support high-need students.

Overall, the plan to address student learning is not totally convincing. The plan sets a framework for learning. The major focus is on the personalized learning plan, however details about its development and implementation are vague. Therefore, the score for this section is the mid-range of medium.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	9
---	----	---

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The focus of the teaching component is on the initiatives of competency, teacher evaluation and professional development. For the professional development and technical assistance for teachers, the details of this support will not be determined until the needs assessment results are analyzed. The needs assessment plan however is comprehensive and is designed to address the needs of the consortium partners.

To address learning communities, the schedule of the schools will be modified to include time for this work. Much of the

consortium's professional development will occur during the summer when school is out of session. This does not appear sufficient for on-going growth of teachers although there will be some school-based opportunities of coaching.

The application is short on details on how the plan's components will accelerate student learning and provide supports to them from their teachers. The instructional strategies are limited to personalized planning and extended learning opportunities. There is some discussion about aligning the student plans with individualized assignments, however information about this is brief regarding informing teacher actions.

Student work is slated to be evaluated using the state's planned formative assessment system, which is not yet implemented. Therefore, the frequency of measuring student progress is limited.

The applicant relies on the personalized learning plans to measure student progress. The frequency of the review of these plans with students and families is defined as several times a year. This frequency is not sufficient to inform student progress and to also inform teacher practice.

The applicant also plans to use the outcomes of the state's summative assessments for teacher evaluation. It is unclear how teachers will be evaluated throughout the school year.

The applicant intends on building and utilizing the work under the current SIG program, however details are not provided on how this will be implemented. The applicant states that the SIG evaluation system links to the professional development master plans. Some of these details are provided, although how it would scale up to the consortium partners is not clear.

The applicant states that the RTI system will be refined to improve identification of learning approaches for students. Their plan to do this is not sufficient to explain how this will be accomplished and become actionable. High-quality learning resources are also not clearly identified. Rather, the applicant states that curriculum and assessments are being rewritten and a digital portfolio will be developed. Details of this work are sparse. Also the process and tools to match student needs is defined as being conducted regularly. This information is insufficient to determine continuous feedback to students. It is unclear how the proposed initiatives will ensure that all participating educators have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress.

The applicant plans to rely on district Data Teams, an analysis of districts' staff roles and the state's data collection system to address the access of school leadership teams to vital information to ensure that schools have effective learning environments. The timelines for this work is not included so it is unclear when these efforts will be realized and available.

Training, systems and practices for educators to utilize the tools of the proposed grant are not clearly defined. Rather the applicant states that there are quality mechanisms in place without providing details. Therefore it is unclear that all participating school leaders and school leadership teams will have the necessary training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs and accelerates student progress.

The plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals will be achieved through a partnership with local universities as well as through the engagement of teachers and principals in the learning communities and personalized professional development. The applicant states that the improved learning environments will attract and retain effective teachers. The plan to do this does not include goals, specific activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible party. Therefore, it is unable to determine if their plan is a credible approach to increase effective teachers for students.

Because many of the details of the teaching component for teachers to implement the strategies are not included, the score

for this section is in the middle of the medium range.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The governance structure of the consortium has been developed to provide support to their schools. The organizational structure is sufficient to provide support and services to its schools although the roles of the partners are not clearly defined.</p> <p>Each school in the consortium has school leadership teams that have flexibility and autonomy over school factors. The applicant plans to consider the individual circumstances of each school as part of its implementation of the grant components. This is a viable approach to ensure school flexibility and autonomy.</p> <p>Schools in the state are guided by the state's competency-based system that provides high school students with options for credit achievement. It is the intention of the grant to further develop competencies in all grades. These competencies will be used to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The specifics of demonstrating mastery are not provided other than using on-line coursework.</p> <p>For high need students, learning resources are adaptable and accessible. The primary vehicle to be used is the personalized plans for each student.</p> <p>The plan for this work to ensure that comprehensive policies and infrastructure exist for every student, educator, and level of the education system to provide needed resources and support are outlined in the application that includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible party. The detail of the plan is lacking for its activities, timelines and deliverables. The activities are general, the timelines are global and the deliverables are not measurable. Due to the lack of details in the plan the score for this section is in the medium range.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium districts may need to modify or develop new policies to support the components of the grant implementation. The details of this process are not included in the application.</p> <p>Some of the participating districts have different systems of data to report student performance to stakeholders. There are also some technology and software needs across the consortium. Efforts of the grant are designed to offer and align these systems. Additionally, the grant will develop an online calibration and collaboration tool for schools for work on an online portfolio. To achieve this work, the participants are committed to providing support and tools to stakeholders. Details about the steps to operationalize these commitments however are not included in the application.</p> <p>The applicant intends to provide appropriate levels of technical support to its stakeholders based on the annual needs assessments. The proposed technical support has a wide range of identified strategies that will serve to ensure sufficient and tailored supports.</p>		

The state's information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems are not operational in all of the consortium districts. The applicant intends on exploring ways to improve this access. Details to accomplish this are not included in the application. The applicant is relying on the state's work in building interoperable data systems for access to student performance data. Budget and human resource information are not addressed in the application.

Because many of the details are not included in the application about district and school infrastructures and supports, the score for this section is in the top of the medium range.

### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The continuous improvement plan contains goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible party. Some of the activities are global and could be goals. The timelines are broad, only identified by year and the deliverables are not measurable. The plan does not account and describe all of the components of the proposal. The Logic Model will be used to guide the evaluation. Focus is on the overall goals. The approach is vague and lacks detail.</p> <p>The consortium improvement team is responsible for monitoring and measuring the grant investments. Additionally, school and district leadership teams will be in place to provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities. Support will be provided to these teams to build their skills using a partner organization. Some details about this work are provided in the application.</p> <p>Mechanisms are identified to publically share the quality of investments to the public. These should be sufficient to ensure wide dissemination of the grant progress and outcomes.</p> <p>Due to the lack of details to monitor and measure the grant investments, the score for this section is in the top of the medium range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>An on-going communication process will be used for internal and external stakeholders. A variety of methods and strategies will be used. Due to its robust engagement policies and practices, the score for this section is high.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>For each of the 12 performance measures identified, a rationale for selecting the measure is provided and sufficient to understand connections to the grant components. Missing in the measures themselves is subgroup outcomes. Results are identified for all participating students only. The applicant reports that disaggregated data is unavailable.</p> <p>The measures are all projected to increase throughout the grant period and beyond and are ambitious and achievable. It is</p>		

unclear however, how frequently the outcomes will be available to tailor the proposed plan. The applicant only states that the refinement for reviewing and improving will take place over the life of the grant.

Notably, the performance measures are for the consortium as a whole. It is unclear how the applicant will evaluate the performance of each of the participating districts. Additionally, for extended learning opportunities, no performance targets are defined for elementary and middle schools.

The score for this section is in the medium range primarily due to the lack of subgroup data and timeliness of outcome availability.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
---	---	---

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Logic Model will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the grant activities. The model is general and lacks measurable outcomes. It is more of a framework.

The applicant intends on examining costs and outcomes specifically student results. Of note, these outcomes identified in the grant do not include subgroups.

The evaluation plan does not include specified timelines and is not specific to each of the projects so it is unclear when such activities will occur to determine effectiveness to improve results.

Due to the lack of information and detail, this section is scored low.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

For each of the eight projects specified in the budget, the applicant identifies the grant funds, funds from other sources and one-time and on-going operational costs. Funds from other sources are in-kind district services. The largest overall budget is for Project Management. The request for funds is approximately \$13 million with a total budget of \$55.5 million.

Of note, this is the section that clearly outlines the projects of the proposal. The primary focus of the proposal is on professional development. The eight projects are:

1. Project management
2. Competency development
3. Extended learning opportunities
4. Personalized Learning Plans

5. Collaborative learning
6. Building leadership capacity
7. Community partnerships
8. Continuous improvement

The amount of funds budgeted for each project appears reasonable and sufficient to implement the projects in the proposal.

It is unclear how the budgets for the projects of competency development and extended learning opportunities will incorporate the work being done by state initiatives. The applicant plans to use SIG and other grant funds for seven of the eight projects. It is unclear how SIG funds will be used given that these funds are usually restricted for use at the specific low-performing school awarded the funds.

Since some of the detail to fully understand the budget assumptions, the score for this section is in the bottom of the high range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
--	----	---

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

To sustain the grant components after the term of the grant will require future funds. The applicant lists possible sources of federal, state, local and private funds.

The applicant contends that the grant investments in professional development will serve to sustain policies and practices as district and school capacity is built using grant funds. This evaluation is sound given the primary focus of the overall grant.

A high-quality plan is not included in the grant proposal to support sustainability. Therefore, the score for this section is in the medium range.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes the expansion of an existing partnership primarily to extend the RTI approach to include social and emotional components. The description includes a plan to do this work, however the plan is very broad, not measurable and does not provide timelines that are frequent. Additionally, it is not clear how RTI will be integrated into the students' personalized learning plans.

For the RTI model, the applicant states that Tier 3 interventions have been the most challenging for districts and schools. Therefore the plan is for the partner to focus on these types of interventions.

The proposed partner, Interagency Team of Pittsfield, has an on-going partnership with the consortium lead district. Outcome results of this existing partnership are not provided to determine its success. Currently, the district annually refers 10-12 students to the partner for services.

It is unclear how the partner agency will scale up its services to the 7 other districts in the consortium. The applicant states that professional development and new protocols will be established. These activities are addressed in the plan, however the implementation plan lacks detail.

Population-level desired results are identified for the partnership outcomes for students, families and the community. Eight performance measures are identified without providing any baseline or target data. District/consortium and student levels are not defined as the applicable populations to be measured. No academic outcomes are identified.

The plan to improve results and target resources is adequately described. Data outcomes are to be reviewed on a quarterly basis. A plan to scale up the project beyond the participating students is not addressed.

One of the goals of the interagency team is to integrate education with the community partnership. These teams are to be developed in each of the consortium districts. By using this model, integration with the educational aspects of the participating students will be achieved.

Building the capacity at the participating schools is described as resulting from the continued collaboration process. No other details are provided.

Tools and supports to assess the needs and assets of the students will be accomplished via the refined RTI model. Details about how this would be accomplished are not evident in the application and are not specified in the plan to improve education and family supports by the partnership or consortium districts.

The decision-making process relies on the interagency committee to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results. It is unclear how the partnership will engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs.

The interagency chairs and district administrators will assess its progress by reviewing data on a monthly basis and review formative and summative data quarterly. This process will adequately serve to assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.

Due to a lack of measurable outcomes and missing information in the description of the partnership implementation plans, the score for this section is at the low end of the medium range.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes and addresses how it builds on the four core educational assurance areas by developing:

1. Competencies and local assessments using existing state standards (*Standards and Assessments*)
2. Protocols for educators to use to analyze student work (*Data systems*)
3. A new educator evaluation system (*Effective educators*)

4. Identify high-need schools (*Low-achieving schools*)

The plan is weak in addressing intervention and services in the low performing schools served by the consortium. No information is provided about the number and needs of these schools.

The plan is primarily focused on professional development for its educators. Building and aligning competencies is also an initiative.

The development of personalized learning plans for students in the 27 schools is planned. The application is short on details on how this initiative will be accomplished. It is difficult to assess this initiative since a sample template of such a plan is not included in the application.

Based on the 8 initiatives, the improvement of the learning environments at the schools and districts are designed to improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators.

The application does not fully provide detail on its methods and supports of accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning other than the use of competencies, extended learning opportunities and by the use of personalized planning. Specific instructional strategies are not described in detail.

As the focus of the grant is on teachers it is designed to increase the effectiveness of their instruction. Details on supporting the needs of each student are only addressed via the personalized planning process.

Because student subgroups are not specified in the grant's performance measures, the outcome data is not clearly defined. Due to this significant lack of information and services and interventions for students, this application does not meet Absolute Priority 1. The initiatives are more about building an environment for personalized learning rather than implementing strategies and methods for student learning.

Total	210	100
-------	-----	-----



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0531NH-3 for Pittsfield School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant, The New Hampshire Rural Education Consortium (NHREC), is comprised of 15 districts and their 27 schools. Its vision for reform is comprehensive and cohesive extending the ultimate goal of personalized learning to all participating districts and goals. The applicant grounds its approach in the four core areas as well as a logic model which follows the five key areas of RTT-D: learning, teaching and leading, district support, partnerships, and continuous improvement. The logic model included in the application illustrates the vision by describing the strategies it intends to use as well as the outcomes it hopes to achieve. This demonstrates a reasonable approach to improve a set of districts and schools through a consortium approach based on consensus leadership, different needs, and varying capacities.

The applicant describes work to date on the four assurance areas which range from:

- adopting college- and career-ready standards which are currently being implemented state wide;
- building data systems, including infrastructure and data collection analysis and use strategies;
- developing educator evaluation systems; and
- providing role and peer mentoring models for participating schools based on personalized pathways.

Much of this work appears to be in the early stages and will be part of the implementation of the RTT-D project.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	4
---	----	---

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a description of how or why the NHREC was formed beyond a brief mention of a meeting held in August. Without this information it is difficult to determine the true extent of each participating District's or School's commitment to the plan regardless of the signed MOUs. This is a critical aspect of a consortia application in that it provides the rationale for its existence and one indicator of shared vision.

The applicant does provide a list by District (SAU) of the participating schools including the required data elements of participating students, their high need status, and educators. The totals indicate that the applicant meets the threshold of serving over 2000 students.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
---	----	---

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an insufficient plan describing how the project will be scaled-up and translated into meaningful change across the districts and schools of the Consortia. The applicant provides some minimal activities to implement the project such as annual needs assessments and collaborative structures that are not described at a level of detail that provides evidence of their feasibility to meet the project's goals.

The applicant does present a list of state level policy statements in support of the project but without sufficient activities or strategies to demonstrate a credible approach to reform and change throughout the NHREC.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	4
---	----	---

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a complete set of annual achievement goals. The process used for setting the goals is aligned with the developing statewide policies but, according to the applicant, "take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the state to define and use more realistic AMOs." It is unclear, therefore, in the application if the goals meet or exceed State ESEA targets.

The performance goals themselves are set for each of the 27 schools in NHREC with varying baselines and end points in SY 2015-16 and post-grant. In general, the rates end in performance at the 80 to 95% of students achieving at proficient or above in both reading and mathematics which is ambitious. Of particular note is that mathematics is generally lower than reading across most of the schools and the grade levels. A more thorough explanation of the differences between reading and mathematics is necessary to fully judge how achievable the goals are within the context of the reform proposal.

The applicant's plan to reduce the achievement gap follows a similar pattern as the student performance goals with gaps decreasing but, in many instances, continuing over the four years. The applicant does provide, in some instances, an end to the achievement gap for economic disadvantaged students but not for Title I and students with IEPs.

As for graduation rates, the eight high schools included in the application will all have a 100% graduation rate at the end of the project period. Given the current rates of approximately 68% to 95% these are ambitious and achievable.

The current college enrollment rate ranges from a low of approximately 35% to a high of almost 65% across the high schools

and sub-groups. The performance goals rise to 70% to 82% which is achievable and very ambitious for some of the high schools and subgroups. The relationship between the enrollment performance area and degree attainment raises a credibility question. The applicant states that historically 30% of the state's 9<sup>th</sup> graders complete a postsecondary degree and that "this work will not show a large impact on this statistic immediately." Since the applicant has set a 70-82% college enrollment rate, a degree attainment rate of 35% may be unreasonable.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	2
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant fails to present a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning for each member of NHREC. Limited data are presented for the lead applicant, Pittsfield, demonstrating improvement in reading at grades 3, 8, and 11 in both achievement and gap closing but without sufficient data points or disaggregation to indicate its ability to improve student learning outcomes. The applicant also claims improvement in other consortia schools but presents no evidence to support those claims.</p> <p>NHREC provides limited evidence of work in achieving ambitious and significant reforms in two persistently low-achieving middle and high schools by the lead applicant. No evidence is presented for the other 14 school districts in the consortia. It is unclear what work, if any, is being undertaken across the consortia.</p> <p>The applicant briefly describes the recording and reporting system used by the lead applicant which claims that it informs and improves participation, instruction, and services but provides no evidence to support that claim beyond its availability. No evidence is presented for the other members of the consortia.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of the Annual School District Report and proposed budget for the lead applicant which lists all school district personnel alphabetically with their salaries in the appendices. All personnel are listed in one report and not separated out by school.</p> <p>The applicant states that this is a "common practice" across the consortia but provides no evidence of other reports from other members. This is not a sufficient response for the consortia.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a description of state policies and initiatives that support personalized learning at the high school level, e.g. credit for mastery of competencies, high school graduation goals, Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium, and other assessment initiatives.</p> <p>As for formal legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements, the applicant provides vague statements regarding a tradition of autonomy and local control but also states that the New Hampshire's approval process and requirements provide for negotiation and appeals. This is an unconvincing description of sufficient autonomy.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes a series of meetings, surveys, and regional forums held to discuss the application. These events appear to have been held during August and September. The major activities for students, families and teachers were a needs survey and three regional community forums.</p> <p>The applicant indicates that 1,264 surveys were returned but does not provide a response rate so it is difficult to determine how well the results reflect community agreement with or support of the application. The applicant does provide a breakout of the number of surveys from each key constituency group which indicates that the most responses were received from</p>		

students, teachers, and parents respectively. The most responses were received from the lead applicant's district. The breakout does not separate core constituency groups by district.

The survey responses to the questions concerning four key areas are provided. The responses seem to indicate that about one-half of the respondents agreed that the schools/educators were already providing many of the personalized educational opportunities. There is no indication as to how the results would have been or could have been used to develop the application. The needs survey may have been an interesting exercise for the consortium but the level of reporting in the application does not provide evidence of community engagement or support.

Notes from the three regional forums included in the application indicate that approximately 35 people attended all three forums, the bulk of whom were school personnel. The application narrative states that 75 stakeholders attended. According to the notes prepared from the sessions the application was to be completed at the end of the week and that the conversations at the forums supported what was included in the plan. This appears to be limited engagement and support.

The most specific feedback included in the application was from the New Hampshire Department of Education which offered both specific research based comments on the design of the project as well as a few corrections and suggestions on the format. The applicant states that it made those changes.

There is Union sign-off on each of the MOUs and on the application as a whole. There is one letter of support from a local Teacher's Association (Milton).

Approximately half of the 46 letters of support in the application are from the schools and districts involved in the application. The remaining letters are from school boards, a few parent organizations, and foundations or charities.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
--	---	---

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes a plan for on-going analysis of current needs in each consortium district as part of its continuous improvement process after the grant is awarded and annually thereafter. The articulated goals of this comprehensive needs assessment is for planning purposes the first year and capacity building for the leadership teams in subsequent years. The outcome of the initial needs assessment is to develop the action steps at individual site level. The consortia will use this activity to develop a coordinated plan for professional development. The timeline is to begin in early 2013, intermediate results in March 2013 and end in late spring 2013. It appears as if the analysis of needs and gaps includes some areas, such as achievement at the site level, that would have been done prior to the submission of the application. The applicant has presented a plan to plan rather than a high quality plan for analysis of the current status in implementing personalized learning environments.

This plan will result in the actual plan for implementing the work of this application. It is apparent that there is much specific detail that will need to be added to the understanding at the site level and the gaps that exist in practice as well as stakeholder understanding. The on-line data collection and the analysis of student achievement data will require a high level of effort and expertise to complete successfully. It is not apparent in the application if appropriate resources and time have been devoted to this effort.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plan to improve learning includes two goals and supporting activities for each. The goals are based on the personalized learning principles including clear statements of competencies aligned with college- and career-ready standards and personalized pathways. It is clear in the application that much of the initial work has been done at the high school level but middle and elementary schools will need to start developing competencies. There is also a great deal of variability across the consortia schools at all levels.

The applicant provides a theory of action that will guide the work at each site and establishes strategies and activities to be implemented to reach the personalized learning goals. The steps are outlined in the application, e.g. annual personalized learning plans, extended learning opportunities, use of technology, and on-line courses. The strategies are at a very general level with appropriate reference to parents and educators but do not provide a level of specificity expected in a high quality plan that will guide the work at different locations with the varying capacities of size and resources referenced in the

application.

Given that the majority of the schools in the consortia are elementary and middle schools who have yet to begin this work, a more robust set of strategies to ensure that students, parents, and educators are provided with more support to develop and implement the personalized learning plans. The applicant references Response to Intervention as a one way to respond to student needs but additional strategies will be necessary to successfully implement the project across the sites.

In addition, the applicant does not provide a complete description of the range of content that will be provided to the students. The emphasis on personalization may require more than a virtual school or technology access. The burden of personalized learning requires a more robust system of supports for students beyond designated advisors and a team structure.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
---	----	----

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plan for improving teaching and leading includes two over-arching goals that mirror the personalized learning pathways for students: develop teacher competencies to define what an educator accomplishes in relation to student outcomes and provide personalized pathways to effectiveness. The goals are supported by three activities including evaluation systems, collaboration, and role redefinition. The timeline for each of these is on-going with unidentified intermediate action steps and the responsibility rests with superintendents and building principals.

The two main vehicles to achieve these results is the expansion of professional development opportunities and providing collaborative learning time. The content and scope of the professional development is to be developed based on the initial needs assessment. Other than an example from the lead applicant, current approaches to professional development and collaborative time is not addressed. The degree of change for teachers and the community as a result of the expansion of professional development and increased planning time is an important consideration for the viability of this plan. While the impact on small schools is acknowledged and an in-depth analysis of needs is planned, additional information on current conditions is necessary to evaluate the credibility of the plan.

The applicant does provide a brief description of the evaluation process that will be based on state level student growth percentile results which will be part of teacher evaluations. It is unclear how decisions will be made to determine the use of a shared or individual attribution model. Given the size of the schools in the consortia this will be an important decision. Principal evaluation systems are illustrated by a feedback process used by the lead applicant but it is unclear if all the sites will use this process.

The data system appears to be under development. The applicant provides an insufficient description of the currently available and prospective data that will be used to accelerate student progress. While on-going and regular formative assessments are mentioned in the application, a high quality plan that ensures all educators have access to and know how to use tools, data, and resources is not evident.

The applicant does include a statement that it will work with a local university to strengthen the "pipeline" of effective teachers and administrators. Its claim that the results of this project will draw teachers and administrators to the area is unconvincing.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's practices, policies, and rules for consortia policy and infrastructure includes two goals focused on differential support mechanisms matched to school and district needs and integrated and interoperable data systems to support student learning. Supporting activities range from hiring staff to conducting needs assessments to implementing data systems. The timeline presented in the application is on-going over the four years without intermediate actions steps to indicate if the applicant is making progress. The deliverables match the activities. The responsible party varies by activity. The credibility of the plan is weakened by the lack of specificity that would allow appropriate monitoring and possible intervention by the leadership team. The applicant's plan focuses on the following:

- The lead applicant, Pittsfield, will manage the project and appears to be responsible for hiring the four new staff and directing the project. Included in the application is the statement that lead applicant retains "decision making authority" for the project and uses the Consortium Board in an advisory capacity. Other leadership structures, i.e. management team and improvement team, have advisory and support functions.

- While the MOU indicates that there will be consensus decision-making across the consortia, the application does not include a formal structure to support consensus decision-making. The lead applicant has the authority to direct the project but local school boards will have the authority to review all policies determined by NHREC and adopt or modify them as they see fit. The challenge of a consortia project to allow sufficient autonomy at the site level, which the applicant addresses, but also ensure that the program is implemented in a high quality fashion across multiple sites with the lead applicant holding most of the management authority, may lead to unfocused and partial implementation.
- The applicant will follow the state's lead toward a competency-based system. There is some indication that the high schools throughout the state are working in this area but the applicant does not indicate how much progress the member high schools have made. The inclusion of elementary and middle schools will be an important part of this project and the applicant provides insufficient details on the how it will facilitate that process.
- Accessibility issues are addressed for English language learners and students with disabilities. There is no indication in the application if the consortia schools include English language learners. However, students with disabilities, as identified by IEPs in the data included in the application, appear to be the lowest performing subgroup. The applicant's proposed approach to accessibility seems inadequate to serve this currently low-performing group of students.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

3

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that consortia members do not consistently provide infrastructure support for personalized learning. There is some indication that the lead applicant and several other unidentified member districts have interoperable data systems but that the technology and data management issues motivated the small rural districts to join NHREC.

Specific information across the consortia was not provided in the application. However, a range of possible supports will be provided as part of the implementation process to ensure access, provide technical support, and interoperable data systems. The applicant's plan is to have each member conduct a review and modify or create policies and plans to implement these requirements.

### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant proposes two goals to guide its continuous improvement process: build the leadership capacity in all participating schools and create a consortium improvement team (CIT). The goals are further delineated by specific activities, timelines that are on-going across the four years, and responsible parties that include the CIT and school personnel.</p> <p>The applicant articulates a continuous improvement process that focuses on both formative and summative evaluation. The CIT will have a key role in both the initial needs assessment which will drive the specifics of this project and will also “design and drive” a comprehensive program evaluation model.</p> <p>The applicant provides an appropriate description of the elements of an evaluation that examines possible causal links between program activities and improved student outcomes. However, the applicant does not clearly indicate how or when it will systematically look at the need for mid-course corrections either across the consortia or within individual sites. Given the differing capacities articulated throughout the application this is an important aspect of the continuous improvement process.</p> <p>The applicant does not address a process for reporting on the results of the formative and summative evaluations to the public. The information sharing that is included in the application appears to be focused on school personnel and informal.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant describes the elements of an on-going strategy for communication and engagement but does not provide any specific activities it intends to undertake to utilize these strategies. The statement that the consortia members currently have on-going communication with their communities does not establish specific strategies for the RTT-D project.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has selected a set of 12 ambitious yet achievable performance measures – one overarching goal, three at the elementary school level, three at the middle school level and four at the high school level – that reflect elements of its plan. A rationale is provided for each performance measure as well as key targets. The measures are not broken out by sub-group performance but apply to all students. The goals are achievable yet ambitious based on current trends and the program goals. The high quality teacher and principal performance measures indicate a growing number for each group with 100% highly qualified teachers and principals at the end of the grant period,

The applicant selected reading at grade 3 and 8 as a key academic indicator and provides an improvement goal at both grade levels of 100% of students reaching or exceeding their grade level benchmark. It should be noted that this exceeds the consortia wide goals for student outcomes.

Grade 3 and Grade 8 students also have two non-academic goals for absenteeism and suspensions that the applicant explains as indicators of engagement. The absenteeism and suspension rates in third grade are low to begin with and the performance measure should be easily met. At grade eight the rates are significantly higher and reflect a known pattern at the middle school level. The eighth grade goals for absences and suspension are ambitious.

At the high school level, the applicant proposes four performance measures that focus on:

- secondary enrollment with 100% of the students completing FAFSA which exceeds the program goals for post-secondary enrollment;
- 9th grade credits and 10<sup>th</sup> grade to 11<sup>th</sup> grade promotion are both indicators of high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment and will be influenced by the introduction of competency based learning strategies;
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade absences are slightly higher than those projected at the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels and projected results follow the same pattern; and
- 100% completion of an extended learning opportunity by all students in grades 9-12.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
---	---	---

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that it will examine the costs and outcomes of the intervention and improvement strategies but does not provide any specific strategies it intends to use or research or evaluation questions it will pursue. It does provide examples of a number of data elements, e.g. professional development costs, that it intends to monitor to determine the effectiveness of investments. Without a complete discussion of what it will specifically examine, it will be impossible to determine the quality of the investment or provide quality information on the worth of the investment. Given the very nature of a consortia, costs may vary by site which the applicant also fails to address.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an adequate budget to support the project. Of particular note, the applicant estimates that the RTT-D funds will support a little less than a quarter of the actual costs of the project while other sources including foundations, other grants, and in-kind contributions support 75% of the effort. This is a positive indicator of the commitment of the consortia schools to the project.

Within the RTT-D budget the bulk of the funds will support personnel costs including the staff to be hired to manage the project, site coordinators, and stipends for the teachers. With fringe benefits, this is almost half of the RTT-D budget which is appropriate given the time and support that will be devoted to the project.

In terms of contracted services, there appears to be very little allocated to hiring outside professional developers to assist in the project. The major contract funding is for meeting facilitation which may be important in some activities but is not the only service the applicant may require. In addition, it was unclear in the budget if the consortia intended to hire an outside evaluator or data consultant to assist with the continuous improvement process to add credibility and rigor to the plan which may add to the sustainability of the project.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has planned on the sustainability of the project as indicated by the design of the project and degree of local funds that are committed to the project from the beginning. Throughout the budget, the applicant identifies which costs will need to be absorbed by the participating schools and districts after the grant. The dollar amounts appear to be relatively small compared to the investment already made. Schools and districts should be able to continue the project based on the budget assumptions made by the applicant.</p> <p>As for sustainability based on the design, the applicant provides its rationale for using the train the trainer model of professional development to build long term capacity with the districts and schools. Given the rural nature of these schools, this is an appropriate strategy to diminish the need for outside professional development which is costly for small schools.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant addresses the Competitive Preference Priority by scaling-up a community partnership from the lead applicant's district to the 8 other districts (SAUs) involved in the project. The applicant is requesting a little over \$1M to support the program over the 4 years to provide a part time coordinator at each SAU to provide intensive social services to the neediest students. It is anticipated that the number of students to be served is relatively small but they are those at highest risk of dropping out. The lead applicant currently refers 10-12 students annually to the community partnership. The applicant does not provide an estimate of the number of students that might be served as a result of extending the partnership.</p> <p>The partnership is also predicated on building linkages across various social service agencies at the site level that are not identified for the extended school districts. It is difficult to determine if there are a deep set of resources available across all the districts. The applicant does indicate that each district will need to investigate ways in which "stronger and more organized relationships can be forged with public and private organizations" which implies different levels of resources across the consortia and different capacities to use this community partnership.</p> <p>The applicant also provides limited information on how students will be identified for these intense services. The applicant offers the model of Tier 3 services provided in the Rtl model but does not explain how this will operate at the district and school level.</p> <p>The applicant provides 11 desired results, three of which contain population-level results ranging from decreased incidences of dropping-out to stable families. The performance measures seem highly desirable but somewhat unrealistic given the size and scope of the intervention.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a cohesive and comprehensive plan to build on the core educational areas of standards, data systems, effective teachers and principals, and turning around low-performing schools to create personalized learning systems. The applicant describes its current work in this area and its plan to extend this work across the grade spans and diverse geographic area.</p> <p>The applicant proposes ambitious and achievable performance measures that will guide the project and determine its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning.</p>		



Total

210

98